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ABSTRACT

This brochure contains highlights from the report, "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges," developed by a task force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The task force integrated several national databases to compile statistics that present a new and more complete picture of college drinking and its consequences. The numbers show that the consequences of college drinking are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many people realize. The first step, for college presidents, as for others, is to recognize the problem as a public health issue of concern to the entire United States. The college president can take the lead in creating programs to change the alcohol culture on campus by: (1) implementing a comprehensive program to address multiple audiences simultaneously; (2) collecting baseline information before the program begins; and (3) securing outside support. Sustainability is essential for the success of any program, and the college president and the institution as a whole should commit to long-term, research-based solutions to campus drinking. Some resources for additional information are listed. (SLD)

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What College Presidents Need to Know About College Drinking

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About This Brochure:

PRESIDENTS

This brochure for college and university presidents contains **highlights** from the report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges.* The report was developed by a special Task Force on College Drinking of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Task Force was composed of college presidents, alcohol researchers, and students. It conducted an extensive analysis of the research literature in order to provide the most current science-based information on college drinking, including:

- the scope of the college drinking problem
- the effectiveness of programs currently used by colleges, universities, and communities (i.e., a discussion of which programs work, which programs do not work, and which show promise)
- recommendations for college presidents about how to change the culture of drinking on campuses
- recommendations for both presidents and the research community to improve interventions

The Task Force hopes that you will use this brochure (and our other materials) as a tool to enable you to be proactive in addressing the culture of alcohol on your campus and to help you speak more confidently about the extent and nature of the problem both on your campus and nationally. The full report of the Task Force and additional supporting documents are available at www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov.

Highlights from:
A CALL TO ACTION: CHANGING THE CULTURE OF DRINKING AT U.S. COLLEGES

A Snapshot of Annual High-Risk College Drinking Consequences

The Task Force integrated several national databases and compiled a list of statistics that present a **new** and **more complete** picture of college drinking and its consequences.

- **Death:** 1,400 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Injury:** 500,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Assault:** More than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Sexual Abuse:** More than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Unsafe Sex:** 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 have unprotected sex and more than 100,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Academic Problems:** About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on

High-Risk College Student Drinking Includes the Following:

- Underage drinking
- Drinking and driving or other activities where the use of alcohol is dangerous
- Drinking when health conditions or medications make use dangerous
- Binge drinking; that is, 5 drinks in a row per occasion for males and 4 for females*

** Moderate drinking by persons of legal age is defined as no more than 2 standard drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women.*

"Decisions about alcohol consumption are not just individual; they can affect the common life of the university."

- **Edward A. Malloy, President, University of Notre Dame**

exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall (Engs et al., 1996; Presley et al., 1996a, 1996b; Wechsler et al., 2002).

- **Health Problems/Suicide Attempts:** More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem (Hingson et al., 2002) and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use (Presley et al., 1998).
- **Drunk Driving:** 2.1 million students between the ages of 18 and 24 drove under the influence of alcohol last year (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Vandalism:** About 11 percent of college student drinkers report that they have damaged property while under the influence of alcohol (Wechsler et al., 2002).
- **Property Damage:** More than 25 percent of administrators from schools with relatively low drinking levels and over 50 percent from schools with high drinking levels say their campuses have a "moderate" or "major" problem with alcohol-related property damage (Wechsler et al., 1995).
- **Police Involvement:** About 5 percent of 4-year college students are involved with the police or campus security as a result of their drinking (Wechsler et al., 2002) and an estimated 110,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are arrested for an alcohol-related violation such as public drunkenness or driving under the influence (Hingson et al., 2002).
- **Alcohol Abuse and Dependence:** 31 percent of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6 percent for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the past 12 months, according to questionnaire-based self-reports about their drinking (Knight et al., 2002).

How does this affect your campus?

As the numbers show, the consequences of college drinking are more significant, more destructive, and more costly than many Americans realize. In addition to the damage done to student lives, these consequences affect:

- The reputation of the institution
- The ability to attract and retain outstanding students
- The college's academic ranking
- The institution's operating costs
- Legal ramifications
- The relationship of the campus with the community

The first step in addressing this problem is to recognize it for what it is- a public health issue that should be of concern to the Nation.

Even in the face of political complexities, incomplete research data, and time constraints, you, as president, are in a critical position to influence the social atmosphere of your campus. As the chief executive of your institution, you can make informed decisions to improve the health and safety of your students and be a catalyst for new research-based programs that will benefit future efforts. The final report of the Task Force on College Drinking provides science-based information to assist you in changing the culture on your campus.

Creating Programs to Change the Alcohol Culture on Your Campus

Taking Action

- **Implement a comprehensive program, like the Task Force's "3-in-1 Framework."** The NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking recommends a comprehensive **3-in-1 Framework** that addresses multiple audiences simultaneously. This is explained in more detail in the full Task Force report, which is available free of charge from NIAAA or online at www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov. Also available is the companion *Reducing Alcohol Problems on Campus: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation,* which provides detailed information on building a responsible, comprehensive, and methodologically sound alcohol program.
- **Collect baseline information before your program begins.** Once you have identified measurable goals, it is important to collect data on the variables your program is designed to change. By allowing researchers to conduct baseline research on your campus before a program begins, you will be better suited to track the effectiveness of the activities and make any needed changes. Also, set incremental goals and take periodic measurements as the program progresses.
- **Secure outside support.** Comprehensive programs are expensive, and you cannot always mount campaigns on your own. Commitments can be arranged from funding sources such as foundations; national organizations; and Federal, State, and local government agencies to support these strategies. With a well-conceived, research-based plan, you are more likely to receive the assistance you need from these outside organizations.

Sustainability Is Essential

- **Create administrative norms.** Once you have established a prevention program, you can work to institutionalize its philosophy into the campus culture. Your staff will learn to look for research-based solutions, check methodology, and seek objective scientific counsel rather than focusing on short-term, reactive fixes. Over time, the continuity of solid, rigorous programming will also create longitudinal data to allow researchers to track results and draw solid conclusions about strategies that you have employed.
- **Continue the conversation.** Throughout your presidency, continue to press this issue whenever possible with all university and national audiences. Seek out and use any opportunity to discuss the issue and your efforts to address it. Your actions will continue to encourage investment in this issue by all members of the college community.

Why Do It?

- Research-based strategies are more effective than quick fixes and provide results that can be quantified.
- Effective, permanent solutions will improve student health and safety.
- Excessive drinking affects all students, increases institutional costs, and hurts town-gown relationships.

Where to Begin?

- **Take an active leadership role.** Make a visible personal commitment and be part of the team that develops a vision for change.
- **Commit to long-term, research-based solutions.** It is often tempting to experiment with simple, untested strategies. However, excessive college drinking is a complex problem requiring complex solutions and many quick-fix solutions have a high failure rate. Therefore, methodologically rigorous approaches are both ethically and financially sound.
- **Persuade the larger campus community.** Integrating research into college alcohol program planning requires not only your participation, but also cooperation from the larger campus community- faculty and staff, students, parents, alumni, alcohol researchers, and policymakers. You can motivate and inspire these groups to work with you by using the visibility of your office to speak passionately about the issue and possible solutions. Make a compelling case for change.

"Universities are often afraid to reveal that they have a problem with alcohol, although everyone knows it anyway. But we've seen important benefits from focusing on the problem and taking a tough stand. Applications are up, student quality is up, more students are participating in activities like drama and music, and alumni giving has increased. I know that support for the university has grown with our reputation for taking strong ethical positions and sticking with them."

Robert L. Carothers, President, University of Rhode Island

Additional Information

The Task Force report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, contains information that can help you better respond to high-risk drinking at your school. Highlights include:

Living Arrangements

The proportion of college students who drink varies depending on where they live. Drinking rates are highest in fraternities and sororities, followed by on-campus housing (e.g., dormitories, residence halls). Students who live independently off-site (e.g., in apartments) drink less, while commuting students who live with their families drink the least.

College Characteristics

A number of environmental influences working in concert with other factors may affect students' alcohol consumption. Schools where excessive alcohol use is more likely to occur include:

- Schools where Greek systems dominate (i.e., fraternities, sororities)
- Schools where athletic teams are prominent
- Schools located in the Northeast

First-Year Students

The first 6 weeks of enrollment are critical to first-year student success. Because many students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life. The transition to college is often so difficult to negotiate that about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.

"We have to be proactive and visibly associated with new values and strategies, but we also must look for ways to involve students, faculty, staff, and the larger community in solving this problem."

- **Susan Resneck Pierce, President, University of Puget Sound**

Established Drinking Patterns

Although some drinking problems begin during the college years, many students entering college bring established drinking practices with them. Thirty percent of 12th-graders, for example, report binge drinking in high school, slightly more report having "been drunk," and almost three-quarters report drinking in the past year. Colleges and universities "inherit" a substantial number of drinking problems that developed earlier in adolescence.

Secondhand Consequences of Drinking

Students who do not drink or do not abuse alcohol experience secondhand consequences from others' excessive use. In addition to physical and sexual assault and damaged property, these consequences include unwanted sexual advances and disrupted sleep and study. The problems produced by high-risk drinking are neither victimless nor cost-free. All students- whether they misuse alcohol or not- and their parents, faculty, and members of the surrounding community experience the negative consequences wrought by the culture of drinking on U.S. campuses.

Other Factors Affecting Drinking

- Biological and genetic predisposition to use
- Belief system and personality
- Expectations about the effects of alcohol
- Availability of alcohol in the area surrounding a campus

RESOURCES

The following materials are available from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) by mail or through the NIAAA Web site (www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov):

Task Force Report

- *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*
  Final Report of the Task Force on College Drinking

Panel Reports

- *High-Risk Drinking in College: What We Know and What We Need To Learn*
  Final Report of the Task Force on College Drinking's Panel on Contexts and Consequences
- *How To Reduce High-Risk College Drinking: Use Proven Strategies, Fill Research Gaps*
  Final Report of the Task Force on College Drinking's Panel on Prevention and Treatment

Brochures

- *What College Presidents Need to Know About College Drinking*
- *What Parents Need to Know About College Drinking*
- *What Peer Educators and Resident Advisors (RAs) Need to Know About College Drinking*

Future Brochures

- *What High School Guidance Counselors Need to Know About College Drinking*
- *What Community Leaders Need to Know About College Drinking*
- *What Students Need to Know About College Drinking*

Planning and Evaluation Handbook

- *Reducing Alcohol Problems on Campus: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation*

Online Resources

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
  www.niaaa.nih.gov
- NIAAA Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free
  www.alcoholfreechildren.org
- NIAAA Kids Web Site
  www.thecoolspot.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
  www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
  www.samhsa.gov
- U.S. Department of Education
  www.ed.gov
- U.S. Department of Justice
  www.usdoj.gov

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NIAAA

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